



Women and Gender in Contemporary Chinese Societies: Beyond Han Patriarchy

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Recent attention to historical, geographic, and class differences in the studies of women and gender in China has expanded our understanding of the diversity and complexity of gendered China. Nevertheless, the ethnic dimension of this subject matter remains largely overlooked, particularly concerning women's conditions and gender status. Consequently, the patriarchy and its oppression of women among the Han, the ethnic majority in China, are often inaccurately or erroneously associated with the whole gendered heritage of China, epitomized by the infamous traditions of footbinding and female-infanticide. Such academic and popular predisposition belies the fact that gender systems in China span a wide spectrum, ranging from extreme Han patriarchy to Lahu gender-egalitarianism.

The authors contributing to this book have collectively initiated a systematic effort to bridge the gap between understanding the majority Han and ethnic minorities in regard to women and gender in contemporary Chinese societies. By achieving a quantitative balance between articles on the Han majority and those on ethnic minorities, this book transcends the ghettoization of ethnic minorities in the studies of Chinese women and gender. The eleven chapters of this volume are divided into three sections which jointly challenge the traditions and norms of Han patriarchy from various perspectives. The first section focuses on gender traditions among ethnic minorities which compete with the norms of Han patriarchy. The second section emphasizes the impact of radical social transformation on gender systems and practices among both Han and ethnic minorities. The third section underscores socio-cultural diversity and complexity in resistance to Han patriarchal norms from a broad perspective.

This book complements previous scholarship on Chinese women and gender by expanding our investigative lens beyond Han patriarchy and providing images of the multi-ethnic landscape of China. By identifying the Han as an ethnically marked category and by bringing to the forefront the diverse gender systems of ethnic minorities, this book encourages an increasing awareness of, and sensitivity to the cross-cultural diversity of gendered China both in academia and beyond.



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